United Nations S/2004/710

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 September 2004

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) of 8 June 2004, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council within three months from the date of the resolution on the operations in Iraq of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and, on a quarterly basis thereafter, on the progress made towards national elections and the fulfilment of all the Mission's responsibilities. The present report is the first submitted pursuant to that resolution.

2. The report provides an update on United Nations activities in Iraq since the last report (S/2004/625 of 5 August 2004), submitted pursuant to paragraph 24 of resolution 1483 (2003) and paragraph 12 of resolution 1511 (2003). It focuses on the United Nations priority tasks set forth in resolution 1546 (2004), particularly with regard to the National Conference and the preparations for the elections scheduled for January 2005. The report also gives an update on security arrangements for the United Nations presence in Iraq and summarizes UNAMI activities during the period under review.

II. Summary of key developments in Iraq

A. Current situation

3. Since its formation on 28 June 2004 the Interim Government of Iraq has taken a number of initial steps to start rebuilding Iraq with a view to improving the living conditions of Iraqis in all parts of the country. Efforts are under way to foster development and economic recovery by improving education and training, creating employment opportunities, and promoting business and trade. These are important building blocks for the transitional political process, not least given the short time in which the Interim Government has been in place and the overall context in which it has to operate.

4. At the same time, the security situation remains volatile and generally unreceptive to significant economic and political initiatives. Governance structures in the provinces and administrative links with Baghdad have yet to be fully established. Economic opportunities are limited across the country and threats to oil

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facilities further indicate the challenges within which the Interim Government is trying to establish its authority. Military combat, violence, assassinations and abductions continue to be reported across the country, exacting a huge toll on human life. Although the total number of incidents against civilians has fallen compared to previous months, the scale of recent fighting gives rise to new concerns.

5. Armed militias connected to key political parties and figures remain active. Insurgents continue to challenge the presence of the multinational force, as well as the new security forces of the Interim Government. Members of the Iraqi security forces appear to have competing loyalties to various entities, including family, tribe and party, as well as the Iraqi State. Political violence has been directed against senior and middle-ranking government officials, as well as senior officials of various political parties. Such tactics are aimed at demoralizing Iraqi public servants and deterring potential candidates from competing for public office, thereby reducing the pool of talent in government and politics. The main victims of this violence are the Iraqi people.

6. Attacks on foreign workers in Iraq have received widespread publicity and condemnation in equal measure, and, although it has received less media attention, the pervasive sense of insecurity felt by Iraqi citizens as a result of extortion, kidnappings and other criminal activities has had a corrosive effect on public confidence in the capacity of political leaders to improve the security situation. In such a situation, it is understandable that local communities and regions focus on their own immediate needs and interests, rather than on the interests of the country as a whole. The forthcoming elections could mark a significant step forward for the people of Iraq, if they are conducted freely and fairly.

7. The humanitarian situation is characterized by a marked disregard for international humanitarian and human rights law. Attacks on Iraqi civilians, residential areas and the nascent police forces are widespread. Places of sanctity are targeted or used by combatants. Combatants continued to fire on ambulances, 16 of which have been destroyed as at 25 August. Hospital facilities have been occupied and in some cases severely damaged by both militia and elements of the multinational force; safe access to people in need has been denied. I have repeatedly reminded all parties of their responsibilities under international humanitarian law, including their obligation to ensure free and unhindered access of medical personnel and humanitarian aid to all areas in need. UNAMI, through advocacy with the multinational force and Iraqi ministries, has addressed this issue as a matter of priority.

8. While fighting has been ongoing in several localities in Iraq, the crisis in Najaf was particularly serious in scope and nature and attracted significant attention. The past weeks witnessed an escalation of fighting between an armed militia loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr, Iraqi security forces and the multinational force. Fighting was concentrated in and around Najaf, close to the Imam Ali Shrine and other areas. Several attempts by the Interim Government of Iraq and a delegation from the National Conference to mediate the crisis were unsuccessful. Regional initiatives by Iraq's neighbours to urgently discuss approaches to the resolution of the Najaf crisis were not pursued.

9. Another initiative, led by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, resulted in a five-point agreement with the militia on 27 August 2004. The agreement led to the cessation of hostilities and the transfer of control of the shrine to the senior cleric.

The plan, inter alia, states that the cities of Najaf and Kufa should be disarmed and that all armed elements should withdraw. It also calls upon all parties, as well as political, social and other movements, to join in a process leading to general elections and full sovereignty, and to create an environment favourable to this process.

10. My Special Representative kept close contact with the Interim Government, the National Conference delegation to Najaf and key Iraqi political leaders on the situation in and around Najaf. He emphasized the need for a peaceful resolution to the crisis, noting that recourse to force could set back the political process and adversely affect the humanitarian situation in and around the city. In my statements of 7 and 13 August 2004, I encouraged the promotion of the rule of law and a peaceful and reconciliatory approach to bring the fighting in Najaf to an end.

11. The situation in Najaf also raised a number of humanitarian concerns. The crisis caused civilian casualties and led to the further erosion of essential services in and around conflict areas, such as the Sadr City section of Baghdad and Najaf, where power, water and health services were most needed. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization, representing their respective United Nations country team clusters, have been collaborating with counterpart ministries, implementing partners and the International Committee of the Red Cross to respond to needs by means of emergency electricity repairs, water supplies and ongoing delivery of medical supplies.

12. Of 300,000 persons living in the centre of Najaf, an estimated 25,000 have been displaced during the hostilities, seeking shelter with host families on the outskirts of the city, in mosques or public buildings on peripheral roads north and south of Najaf. A range of organizations, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations, as well as the Red Crescent movement, have provided humanitarian assistance to these displaced persons.

B. The National Conference

13. At the request of the Interim Government of Iraq, and pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 1546 (2004), the United Nations assisted in the convening of a National Conference to select an Interim National Council and promote national dialogue and consensus-building on the country's future. To that end, I had dispatched a small team to support the Preparatory Committee for the Conference chaired by Fouad Massoum. From the outset, the United Nations had emphasized that, if it were to be successful, it would be essential to make the Conference as inclusive, diverse and representative of Iraqi society as possible, in order to generate a genuine and substantive debate on the country's future. This was necessary to broaden and strengthen the transitional political process.

14. When it became apparent that more time was needed to expand participation in the Conference, the United Nations advised that it was more important to work towards a successful outcome of the Conference than to hold it on time during the month of July 2004, and therefore recommended that the start of the Conference be delayed. The Preparatory Committee subsequently decided to postpone the beginning of the Conference for two weeks, until 15 August 2004. Following

numerous consultations with the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and the Steering Group of the Committee, the list of Conference delegates was expanded, on the basis of recommendations of the United Nations. While not all the constituencies that the United Nations had hoped to see participate in the Conference ultimately did so, the additional time did allow the Preparatory Committee to broaden participation in the Conference.

15. The National Conference was held from 15 to 18 August 2004 at the Convention Centre in Baghdad. It was attended by more than 1,100 delegates from all Iraqi governorates, representing a wide spectrum of Iraqi society. Participants included representatives of civil society institutions, professional associations, and more than 70 political parties, as well as independent candidates, tribal, social and cultural figures, artists, and representatives of various ethnic and religious groups. During the inaugural session of the Conference, statements were made by the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Fouad Massoum; the President, Ghazi al-Yawer; the Vice-President, Roj Shawees; the Prime Minister, Ayad Allawi; and my Special Representative, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi.

16. The procedural rules for committee work and choosing delegates to the Interim National Council were finalized during the Conference. The agenda reflected the work of the committees and included the selection of the Interim National Council. Four committees, representative of the diverse groups, respectively covered the security situation; the reconstruction effort; human rights and transitional justice; and the political process. Working groups were formed to discuss draft papers and issue recommendations on each theme. These recommendations were then presented to the plenary of the Conference for its endorsement. The Conference decided to establish an Interim National Council, as recommended by the working groups. One of the key functions of the Interim National Council will be to monitor the work of the Interim Government. Its creation was generally considered to be an important step towards widening the base of democratic governance. It was stressed that the Council needed to be representative and professional.

17. In addition to encouraging participation in the Conference, the United Nations advised on a number of other important issues, namely, procedures for the preparation and conduct of the Conference; the agenda; a media campaign to raise public awareness of the Conference and its mandate; and the mechanism for the selection of the Interim National Council. In his address to the National Conference, my Special Representative emphasized that it was in the interest of all Iraqis that the Interim National Council be as inclusive as possible, so as to be effective and credible and lay the groundwork for the upcoming elections.

18. The level of public awareness about the National Conference and its importance for national dialogue and reconciliation was raised by the decision to delay the Conference, and by the public information campaign funded by the United Nations. The active engagement of the UNAMI press spokesperson and political team with the Iraqi media by means of background briefs, press statements and interviews made it possible to present a broader perspective about the Conference to the wider public. In support of the efforts of the organizers of the Conference, my Special Representative met with participants in the Conference to facilitate the proceedings, and also engaged with national and international media.

19. The mechanism for the selection of members of the Interim National Council and its final composition was the subject of contentious debate. While several

formulas for the selection of members were considered, a number of delegates expressed concern that the lack of time for preparing the lists privileged established parties, who enjoyed stronger networks and had prior knowledge of the selection mechanism. Eventually, the members of the Interim National Council were selected from a single list following the withdrawal of a second competing list. A number of participants held the view that the single list maintained the dominance of the established parties and thus did not allow an Interim Council that would be fully inclusive and representative of Iraqi society. Although the final list could have been more representative, discussions among different groups allowed the Conference to complete its task.

20. The National Conference was held against the backdrop of ongoing fighting in Najaf, which did not create the most propitious environment for resolving differences and promoting national reconciliation. The tense situation in Najaf diverted some of the attention of Conference participants and of the Interim Government. It also prevented the participation of a number of political actors, who argued that there could not be a genuine national dialogue under the circumstances.

21. There was also a perception among several participants that the Conference was organized by one of the major political parties and was dominated by established political parties. This characterization presented both a challenge and an opportunity. It gave the smaller parties and the relatively new political forces the chance to witness "give and take" democratic politics and provided a window on the forthcoming elections. Nonetheless, inasmuch as the Conference attempted to expand representation, more efforts could have been made to reach out to reluctant constituencies, thereby achieving genuine inclusiveness.

22. Despite these shortcomings, the Conference completed its task. It therefore constitutes an important milestone in Iraq's transitional political process. For the first time in several decades, a large number of Iraqis gathered to freely discuss vital issues facing their country. The National Conference was the first opportunity to demonstrate the Interim Government's commitment to a transparent and inclusive political process leading to national elections in 2005. In the midst of grave security concerns, no significant disruptions occurred. Delegates and political groups made decisions on how to form coalitions, how to choose rules of procedure and how to strategize on the basis of such rules.

23. The Conference was an especially important experience for the small political parties and independents and may serve them well in preparing for the elections in January 2005. The sustained engagement of large numbers of Conference participants with the issues of the day indicated that Iraqis are ready to participate in democratic processes if provided an opportunity to do so. In that sense, the National Conference can be seen as an important step in a political process towards the holding of democratic elections.

III. Security arrangements for the Mission

24. The security assessment and related measures for staff protection in Iraq, as set out in paragraphs 5 to 7 of my previous report (S/2004/625), remain unchanged. The small United Nations staff presence in the "international zone" is operating at the outer limit of acceptable and prudent risk. The ceiling for the deployment of United Nations international substantive, support and security staff in Iraq currently stands

at 35. Any expansion of United Nations staffing or activities, particularly outside the "international zone", will not only require the full implementation of the protection arrangements set out in previous reports, but also a qualitative improvement in the overall security environment.

25. In paragraph 13 of resolution 1546 (2004), the Security Council noted its intention to create a distinct entity under unified command of the multinational force with a dedicated mission to provide security for the United Nations presence in Iraq. The Council also recognized that the implementation of measures to provide security for staff members of the United Nations system working in Iraq would require significant resources. It called upon Member States and relevant organizations to provide such resources, including contributions to the envisaged entity for the protection of the United Nations presence in Iraq. The multinational force will provide broad area security, escort United Nations personnel, and control access to and protect the outer perimeter of United Nations facilities. Efforts by the multinational force to establish this entity continue. The United Nations, at the request of the multinational force, has encouraged a number of Member States to provide troops or make financial contributions to such an entity, which should consist of military units of about three battalions. I shall continue to support these efforts.

26. In addition to the protection provided by the multinational force, there is a requirement for an integrated United Nations security structure to carry out access control and patrols within facilities, to provide personal security details both within United Nations premises and on the move, to conduct training, and to coordinate security arrangements between UNAMI and other United Nations organizations, as well as with the multinational force. The UNAMI integrated security structure will consist of four elements, namely, international security staff, protection coordination officers, personal security details, and guard units. The deployment of these elements will be subject to ongoing assessments of the overall security situation in Iraq over the coming months and the related deployment of substantive staff. Deployment will also depend on the completion of the necessary logistical arrangements, including secure office and living accommodation.

27. The international security staff will provide security services, conduct security operations and have the status of United Nations staff members. Protection coordination officers are United Nations staff specialists who coordinate the movement and protection of United Nations personnel with the multinational force and other organizations. Currently, efforts are under way to recruit 35 protection coordination officers, with the intention to deploy six of them, initially, early in September. Subject to the conditions stated in paragraph 24 above, the goal is complete deployment of all 35 early in November.

28. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations initiated efforts to identify Member States that have the capacity to provide trained personal security details to the United Nations. For UNAMI, a minimum of four personal security details will be required to protect individuals such as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and other designated UNAMI officials and visitors. A personal security detail consists of 12 persons, trained together, who deploy and work as a team. Eighteen Member States responded positively and, to date, a United Nations expert team has assessed the capabilities of six Member States with positive results. During the month of September, personal security details from one other Member

State will be assessed. Current preparations and plans would allow for the deployment of up to two teams by the end of September. Two additional teams could be deployed later, if required by UNAMI.

29. In addition, UNAMI requires three 160-person armed guard units for the protection of Mission facilities. Guard units have the status of national contingents in the Mission. Discussions have so far been held with six Member States with regard to the provision of paramilitary, civilian police and military guard units. No commitments have been made so far and discussions with Member States continue. The deployment of one guard unit to Baghdad as early as 30 September will be essential for the Mission's planning schedule.

30. A specific Security Council mandate to obtain and deploy the guard units is required. In addition, indications from Member States approached thus far are that, without a clear and unambiguous legal basis, many if not all of the potential contributors may decline to contribute units. The generation of the guard units may represent the greatest challenge to establishing the United Nations security structure in Iraq. The United Nations will need the full support of the Security Council and Member States to obtain the units required to secure UNAMI facilities in Iraq.

31. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator are collaborating closely to develop an integrated security management structure. UNAMI, the Office of the Security Coordinator, and the United Nations agencies, programmes and funds will coordinate closely to provide a comprehensive, timely and cost-effective response to the significant security challenges expected to prevail for the foreseeable future in Iraq.

IV. Update on United Nations electoral assistance activities

32. The greatest challenge facing the electoral process in Iraq is the insecure environment in which the preparatory work is currently being done. While the United Nations has continued to make every effort to assist in the electoral process, as circumstances permit, the responsibility for organizing and conducting the election rests with the Iraqi authorities. The electoral component of UNAMI is primarily responsible for supporting the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq. Under Coalition Provisional Authority order 92, the Electoral Commission has the exclusive mandate to conduct the transitional elections. United Nations electoral assistance is currently concentrated on two main tasks. The first task is focused on assistance in consolidating the Electoral Commission, in particular its presence throughout the country and the induction and training of staff. The second task is centred on assisting in the preparation, organization and planning of electoral activities, necessary to meet the deadline of 31 January 2005, as well as of the elections to be conducted later, in the transitional period.

33. The Chief Electoral Officer of UNAMI, who is also the international member of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent Electoral Commission, heads the United Nations electoral team. The Chief Electoral Officer supervises a team of international electoral experts, from both the United Nations and other organizations, assisting the Commission. Since August 2004 these experts have been instrumental in supporting the Commission in elaborating the institutional design, drafting regulations and procedures, defining the operational concepts and

modalities to be used — in particular with regard to voter registration — and establishing the electoral administration.

34. Several senior staff of the Electoral Commission's national headquarters have now been appointed and the procedure for selecting the heads of future Governorate election offices has also commenced. The recruitment of Iraqis to these key positions will permit a substantial increase in the capacity of the electoral institution. Of critical importance for the timely delivery of the election, these staff will begin the process of establishing election offices throughout the country. To accommodate the recruitment of the new staff, induction and training have been prepared and are scheduled to commence on 1 September 2004.

35. The electoral component of UNAMI has been preparing projections and feasibility studies for a variety of operational models, to be considered by the Independent Electoral Commission. The results of the studies led to an acknowledgement that a voter registration exercise based on a completely new system would not permit the organization of elections before 31 January 2005. Consequently, an alternative approach using the public distribution system, also known as the ration card system, has been adopted by the Commission as the most practical means to create a voters roll within the tight time frame available. Using the personal security details database as a starting point, the records will be put on public display, enabling eligible voters to verify the details and, if necessary, make changes or have their records added to the roll.

36. The Mission's electoral component, in close coordination with UNDP in Iraq, has also assisted and supported the Electoral Commission in refurbishing necessary facilities, furniture and computer equipment. UNDP has provided critical and timely assistance by supporting the training and travel of Commission staff, contracting international electoral consultants, and responding to requests to procure computer and other necessary equipment to establish the election offices.

37. The regulatory framework for both the electoral administration and operational activities is progressing with the support of the United Nations electoral component. The rules of procedure for the operations of the Board of Commissioners as well as a code of ethics have been successfully adopted. Several remaining administrative regulations, which are in preparation, will structure and define the internal operation of the electoral administration. Finally, operational regulations with regard to (a) voter registration, (b) registration of political entities, (c) certification of candidate lists, and (d) a code of conduct for electoral observers are currently being drafted.

38. At the formal request of the Independent Electoral Commission, the United Nations is the lead international agency supporting the Iraqi electoral process. The UNAMI electoral component, in close cooperation with the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs, is coordinating the provision of international financial and technical assistance to the Commission. An informal International Contact Group on Elections chaired by the Chief Electoral Officer has been established in Baghdad. Its first meeting was held on 19 August 2004. This group will continue to meet regularly in order to share information on the electoral process and to coordinate international support on the ground. In addition, an electoral cluster has been established under the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Iraq Trust Fund within the International Reconstruction Trust Fund Facility

for Iraq to channel voluntary contributions from donor countries to activities in support of the Electoral Commission and the electoral process.

39. Preparations for the elections are facing two key challenges: to build the electoral administration from scratch, particularly at the local level, and, at the same time, to meet the daunting logistical requirements for voter registration and polling, within a precarious security environment. The security environment continues to pose a very profound challenge for the successful achievement of these goals. Significantly, the deliberate low public profile of the Electoral Commissioners, imposed by security concerns, has limited their ability to create recognition and awareness for the electoral institution, as well as its role and mandate in the transitional process. This awareness and recognition of the independence of the Electoral Commission will be necessary to gain the confidence and support of the Iraqi people.

40. One other challenge is the funding of the Electoral Commission. So far, no mechanism has been established by the Interim Government of Iraq for guaranteeing the financial autonomy of the Commission and access to the full amount of funds earmarked for elections in the Iraqi national budget. Nevertheless, the Commission has received assurances of support from the Interim Government. A lack of timely access to funds could create delays in the electoral process.

41. The support of the international community to the Electoral Commission has been recognized as critical to the successful organization of elections by 31 January 2005. In organizing elections that meet international standards, the Commission will rely heavily on the technical support of the international community, particularly with regard to the development of the Commission as an independent institution, assistance in operational planning, procurement, data management systems, training and public information about the electoral process. The United Nations will make every effort to strengthen its support for the electoral process to avoid undue delays. I count on other technical assistance providers to do the same.

V. Update on the activities of the Mission

A. Deployment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Baghdad

42. My Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq arrived in Amman on 8 August 2004. Following mandatory security training and meetings with UNAMI staff and the Heads of United Nations agencies and programmes in Amman, Mr. Qazi proceeded to Baghdad on 13 August with a seven-member core team. Immediately upon arrival, he met with President Al-Yawer and Prime Minister Allawi, both of whom welcomed the re-entry of the United Nations and assured him of their full cooperation.

B. Political activities

43. The immediate engagements of my Special Representative included the National Conference and contacts aiming at a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Najaf. He had an opportunity to meet with leaders from Iraqi political life, including

non-governmental organizations, members of minority groups and women's organizations participating in the Conference. In particular, discussions were held with Iraqi leaders who were, for a period of time, considering withdrawing from or refusing to participate in the National Conference. He also began to call upon members of the diplomatic corps in Baghdad, including the representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council, and senior officials of the multinational force.

44. In all the contacts, my Special Representative expressed the readiness of the United Nations to assist Iraqis, as circumstances permitted, in the transitional political process, as requested by the Interim Government of Iraq and the Security Council. Another theme emphasized was the need for Iraqis to assume ownership of the transitional political process and the importance of resolving differences through peaceful means.

45. The presence in Baghdad of my Special Representative with a political team will greatly facilitate contacts at the national level and preparations of periodic and specialized assessments of the developing situation in Iraq. However, in the absence of regional offices and with severe restrictions on the movements of United Nations staff owing to the serious security situation, the UNAMI offices in Kuwait and Amman remain important.

C. Capacity-building, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development

46. During the period under review, UNAMI has continued to facilitate a sustained effort to support coordination efforts of the Iraqi authorities in response to the humanitarian needs arising from the outbreak of hostilities in different parts of the country. UNAMI makes every effort to ensure that, whenever possible, Iraqi nationals, including contractors, non-governmental organizations and other partners, are given the tasks of project implementation.

47. Humanitarian activities have been coordinated through the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Displacement and Migration in Baghdad. These Ministries have established a 24-hour crisis operation room and a Directorate for Humanitarian Affairs, respectively. The Ministries of the Interior, Municipalities and Public Works, Human Rights, Trade, Environment, Planning and others have joined the coordination efforts; they are increasingly seeking a greater involvement of the United Nations on the ground in the contingency and coordination processes aimed at building capacity at the ministerial level to establish a National Emergency Coordination Centre. However, the security situation, continued violence and specific incidents, such as kidnappings, clearly prevent an expansion of the United Nations humanitarian presence at this time. A watching brief on potential flashpoints is being maintained through the Mission's humanitarian information network which is currently being consolidated with non-governmental organization partners in 15 of the 18 Iraqi governorates.

48. Support to the reconstruction process through the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund continues in cooperation with principal Iraqi Ministries and other organizations. As at 22 August 2004, the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund Steering Committee has approved more than US$ 395 million for 37 projects addressing urgent rehabilitation or reconstruction needs in the areas of education, health, environment, basic services

and housing, among others. United Nations agencies are now taking all necessary steps to ensure the fullest utilization of approved funds although the security situation continues to be a constraint on rapid implementation. In the coming months further projects are being finalized in cooperation with the Iraqi authorities, which will be presented at the donors conference in Tokyo in October 2004.

D. Human rights activities

49. UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights are closely following the human rights situation in the country. The Human Rights Office of UNAMI continued to assist non-governmental organizations in developing their role in Iraqi society. To this end, training projects on management skills and human rights documentation and monitoring are ongoing. A grant scheme is being devised to support new civic groups, particularly those with a human rights orientation. A human rights officer has been included in the team of my Special Representative and was deployed to Baghdad on 27 August 2004. This will facilitate liaison with relevant ministries, civil society and others to promote human rights and the rule of law.

E. Public information activities

50. UNAMI public information activities have been aimed at educating the wider public about the United Nations mandate and activities in Iraq. The United Nations, in its advisory role, also assisted the media campaign to raise public awareness of the National Conference. This was achieved through the provision of United Nations financial and technical assistance, mobilizing Iraqi expertise and the extensive use of all major print and media outlets.

51. In the coming months, the efforts will be focused on assisting the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq in the area of voter education. There appears to be a strong desire on the part of the Iraqi public to learn more about the election process. To this end, training workshops are being organized for Iraqi journalists and civil servants associated with public information activities. Attention is also being given to developing a coherent and imaginative approach, in consultation with the Electoral Commission, to enhancing public awareness regarding the mechanics of the forthcoming elections.

F. Facilities, logistics and budget

52. An administrative and logistics detachment of United Nations support staff has been operating in Baghdad since 8 July 2004 to plan and prepare for the re-entry of my Special Representative and his team, as circumstances have permitted. Their work, which has been supported by the Interim Government of Iraq and the multinational force, enabled UNAMI to re-engage in the implementation of the mandate. Initial efforts focused on establishing interim offices and the requisite communications infrastructure to support the deployment of United Nations staff. The detachment also supported the engagement of the United Nations in the National Conference. Currently, the focus is on the development of permanent facilities in Baghdad. Despite logistical and security constraints, significant progress

has been made. Decisions on the actual occupation of these facilities will however require a prior security assessment.

1. Facilities

53. Consolidation of facilities has been completed in the broader UNAMI mission area with the closure of the Larnaca office, the relocation of the UNAMI office in Amman to secure premises and the opening of the Logistics Support Base in Kuwait, which has proved to be very useful in the support and establishment of facilities in Basra and Baghdad. Logistics support is managed under a common services agreement framework which provides support to the Mission and specialized agencies and programmes. I wish to acknowledge the excellent cooperation rendered to UNAMI by the Governments of Jordan and Kuwait.

54. At present, temporary offices have been established at three different locations within the "international zone" in Baghdad. There is an emerging consensus that the Diwan School would be the most suitable location for the headquarters of UNAMI, subject to the implementation of security-related enhancements. The occupation of these premises will not be considered before minimum operational security modifications have been completed. As a result, the planning and infrastructure development for full occupancy have started with a view to having the facility ready by mid-November. The tentative deadline is contingent upon the deployment of necessary support staff, as circumstances permit.

55. Renovation work continues at the United Nations-designated facility in Basra; the expected completion date is 30 September 2004. Additional premises have been identified and an agreement for their use is currently being discussed with the relevant Iraqi authorities. Tenders for the development of facilities in Erbil are being evaluated. It is expected that the project will take three months to complete once the work has started. It should be noted, however, that the shipment of necessary equipment to Erbil from the United Nations Logistics Base in Italy has been held in abeyance pending further discussion with the Interim Government of Iraq regarding the appropriation of United Nations-owned assets by the concerned local authorities in the north of Iraq.

2. Logistics

56. The logistics planning framework for Iraq is determined by two basic factors: a serious security situation with the consequent need to minimize staff exposure to unnecessary risks, and the lack of basic support infrastructure. UNAMI has concluded that the only viable means for providing logistics support for the time being would be through the utilization of a support services contract that is currently providing support for the multinational force. To this end, arrangements are being discussed and a memorandum of understanding is being concluded between the United Nations and the multinational force in Iraq. I am confident that these arrangements will enhance logistics support.

3. Budget

57. Projections indicate that previously approved funds will be adequate to cover current expenditures of UNAMI for the remainder of 2004. I have recently approved a concept of operations for UNAMI. A comprehensive operational plan is currently being developed. To that end, the substantive goals and tasks of UNAMI are being

elaborated to identify the activities of the mission and the manner of implementation, as circumstances permit. Once these are completed, the number and type of personnel needed to fully implement the mandate will be determined. It should be noted that the UNAMI budget for 2005 will have to reflect the requirements for electoral staff and enhanced security arrangements.

G. Other issues

1. 19 August commemoration

58. The commemoration of the first anniversary of the victims of the terrorist attack on the United Nations headquarters was observed on 19 August 2004, at solemn ceremonies in Amman, Baghdad and Kuwait. In Baghdad, a poignant gesture was made by a delegation from the General Union of Students in the Republic of Iraq. The delegation visited the Canal Hotel compound to place flowers, observe a minute's silence and offer prayers.

2. Agreements

59. Mission agreements with host countries where UNAMI is deployed are essential to enable movement, security and various administrative and logistical functions. The status-of-mission agreement with Jordan was signed in August. The agreement with Kuwait is in the final stages of preparation and is expected to be signed soon. The United Nations is also finalizing a status-of-mission agreement with the Government of Iraq, as well as bilateral agreements with the United States of America on protection by the multinational force pursuant to resolution 1546 (2004) and on logistical assistance (see para. 56 above).

VI. Observations

60. Following the restoration of sovereignty to an Interim Government of Iraq on 28 June 2004, the convening of the National Conference marked another step in Iraq's political transition towards a constitutionally elected Government. The Conference was held in difficult circumstances and had many shortcomings. In particular, neither the Conference itself, nor the Interim National Council which emerged from it, was as broad-based and as inclusive as most Iraqis would have wanted. Yet the Conference did proceed without major disruptions and managed to make advances on several critical aspects. The main themes discussed at the Conference should be further developed into a national agenda reflecting the ideas and concerns of all segments of Iraqi society.

61. At the same time, however, notwithstanding the restoration of sovereignty and the holding of the National Conference, the overall security environment has not seen any significant improvement. Coupled with a tragic pattern of hostage-takings and indiscriminate killings of innocent civilians, there has been renewed activity on the part of various insurgent groups throughout the country. In addition to severely disrupting everyday life for Iraqis, the ongoing violence could undermine confidence in the transitional political process, making it more difficult to create the conditions necessary for the holding of elections in January 2005.

62. The Interim Government faces the heavy burden — especially given the circumstances and manner in which it was selected, and the limited mandate it has been given — of keeping the political transition process on track and as inclusive as possible. The Interim Government is trying to work in this direction, and needs to be assisted by all in a position to help. Ultimately, the people of Iraq must be continually reassured and convinced that the process is unequivocally moving towards the goal of making them the masters of their own political future. In the brief but highly significant period that lies ahead, the Interim Government, together with the Interim Council, has a special responsibility to make the political process as widely inclusive as possible in order to reflect the full range of the legitimate aspirations of the Iraqi people.

63. A crucial challenge for the Iraqi authorities will be to create the necessary conditions to allow Iraq to become a society based on the rule of law. This implies a coordinated effort in the transformation of law and order institutions, encompassing police, judicial and penal reform. All parties should actively support the Government's decision to disband militias, whose members should be reintegrated into civil society. All parties should refrain from actions which could exacerbate tensions and must adhere to their responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law, especially with regard to the protection of civilians. Moreover, all political and civic forces need to recognize that years of shared suffering require a shared effort to develop a common vision for building a society respectful of the diversity and heritage of Iraq. An Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned process entails the responsibility for taking actions and generating incentives that can bring the country together. Only then can the political process start to reverse the pattern of violence and insecurity.

64. It must be recognized that the problem of insecurity can only be addressed through a political process. This requires a commitment to stop relying solely or mainly on threats or actual use of armed force and to pursue determined and genuine efforts to address political, economic, social and cultural concerns and grievances by peaceful means. It also requires a shared willingness to engage in sustained and transparent dialogue in a spirit of mutual understanding and compromise. All Iraqi parties already taking part in the transitional process should continue to work towards making it more inclusive and participatory. Primary responsibility in this regard lies with the Interim Government. Additional efforts need to be made to engage with those constituencies that have yet to join the political transition process and to enable Iraqi institutions to make decisions that reflect the views and concerns of the Iraqi people. The United Nations, through my Special Representative, stands ready to play a facilitation role in the political process, as it pertains to all aspects of its mandate in Iraq.

65. Iraqis will need to develop a comprehensive approach to rebuilding their country — political, military, socio-economic and rights-based. This will be a long-term process over several years. Although Iraq clearly has the human potential to succeed, it will need the full political and economic support of the international community. Iraq's neighbours have an important role to play in this regard, by promoting regional dialogue and cooperation. I look forward to more initiatives aimed at normalizing Iraq's relations with the region and the international community.

66. I would like to empahsize that the Iraqis themselves are responsible for the electoral process and its outcome: the elections will be organized and conducted by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq. The United Nations will continue its advisory role to strengthen the Commission's independence and help promote its work. I call upon Member States to support the Commission and the Interim Government in fulfilling their roles in leading the Iraqi people to the full enjoyment of their freedoms.

67. With the deployment to Baghdad of my new Special Representative and a core UNAMI team, the United Nations has entered a new phase in implementing the mandate conferred upon it in resolution 1546 (2004). However, our mandate in Iraq has brought us yet again face to face with the possibility that United Nations staff may become main targets of violence. This poses a fundamental challenge for our work in Iraq: how should we operate in a country where the people want and expect us to help, while certain groups and individuals are determined to prevent us from fulfilling our mandated tasks, including by resorting to violence?

68. A conducive security environment is clearly and intimately linked to the performance of our operations in Iraq. At this juncture, circumstances do not permit the United Nations to implement to the fullest extent the essential tasks under its mandate pursuant to resolution 1546 (2004). Unless and until there is a significant improvement in the overall security situation, UNAMI will have to continue to work both inside and outside Iraq, as circumstances permit, with a restricted presence on the ground in Iraq. The security of United Nations staff remains the overriding guiding principle for our mission. This means that our role and presence in Iraq cannot be separated from the risks to which we are exposed. Our actions should be confined to what is logistically feasible and advisable against the backdrop of the evolving reality on the ground.

69. It is therefore crucial that the necessary security arrangements for United Nations operations in Iraq are finalized as soon as possible. It is particularly important that the distinct entity of the multinational force mandated to provide security for the United Nations presence should be identified or deployed immediately prior to the deployment of the UNAMI guard units. I expect the full support of Member States, particularly in the Security Council, to contribute to this common endeavour.

70. It is vital that the transition process succeeds. The United Nations remains committed to doing everything possible, as circumstances permit, to support Iraqi efforts in the political and economic reconstruction of their country. Let me emphasize again that Iraqis need to have full ownership of the political process. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation for the role of all United Nations staff working on Iraq. I am particularly grateful to our Iraqi national staff, whose commitment under very difficult circumstances helped UNAMI to bridge the difficult period from August 2003 to the present.